MEMORIAL IN BEHALF OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

IN RESPECT TO

Adapting its Canals to the Defense of the Lakes:

WITH THE

Message of the President of the United States,

COMMENDING IT

TO CONGRESS.

Washington, June 13th, 1862.

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TO HIS EXCELLENCY,

ABRAHAM LINCOLN,

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES:

The Legislature of the State of New York, on the 22d of April, 1862, passed an act to adapt the canals of the State to the defense of the northern and northwestern lakes. Their joint resolution, of the same date, requested the Governor of the State "to take such measures as he 'shall deem necessary and proper for inviting the attention of the General Government to the 'measures proposed in the act, and their great importance to the national interests."

Pursuant to that resolution, the Governor, having transmitted to the President of the United States a copy of the act duly authenticated, specially delegated the undersigned, as having been officially connected for several years with the canals of the State, to present the subject proposed in the law to the consideration of the General Government. In the execution of that duty, the principal facts necessary to be understood have been verbally communicated to the President, but, under his permission, they are now respectfully laid before him in writing, and somewhat more in detail.

They fall under the two general heads of the National Defense and the National Commerce.

I. The practicability of employing canals as engines of national defense mainly arises from the recent unexpected but very important discovery, that impregnable mail-clad vessels, comparatively small in size, are capable of effectually resisting vessels of vastly greater dimensions; and further, that one such impregnable vessel would be able, in a few hours, to destroy a whole squadron of vessels of war of the description heretofore in use. This striking truth so signally demonstrated by the recent achievement of the Monitor upon the waters of the Chesapeake, almost within the hearing of the National Capital, must inevitably work a radical revolution in naval warfare. Among its other singular and immediate results, is the greatly increased importance which it imparts to canals of moderate volume, heretofore supposed to be useful only for carrying vessels of commerce. As carriers of impregnable vessels of war, they assume at once a new dignity. They rise to the rank of naval channels, and become necessary parts of the machinery of war.

The interesting question then arises, what dimensions are required for a canal to enable it to pass impregnable vessels adequate to the defense of our national waters, and especially the great chain of lakes?

On this point testimony is at hand of the highest authority, derived from a source no less reliable than Ericsson himself, the inventor of the "Monitor." A letter herewith transmitted

from that distinguished engineer and mechanician states: That an impregnable war vessel of 25 feet wide, and 200 feet long, with a shot-proof turret, carrying a gun of 15-inch calibre, with a ball of 450 pounds, and capable of destroying any hostile vessel that can be put on the lakes, will draw, without ammunition, coal or stores, but 6 feet and 6 inches water; and, consequently, will need only a canal wide and deep enough to float a vessel of those dimensions, with locks of sufficient size to pass it.

The Erie and the Oswego canals of the State of New York, respectively connecting the Hudson river with Lake Erie at Buffalo, and Lake Ontario at Oswego, are 70 feet wide, and 7 feet deep; but their present locks are too small for the purpose in question. The cubic contents of a lock required to pass the impregnable iron vessel above described are about 38,500 feet. The present Erie and Oswego locks, which are but 18 feet wide, 110 feet long, and 7 feet deep, contain but 13,800 cubic feet. If enlarged to 26 feet wide, and 220 feet long, (to admit the swing of the gates) they would contain 39,900 cubic feet.

In point of capacity, the canals of Canada far exceed those of the State of New York. The locks of the series of canals around the rapids of the St. Lawrence, within the British dominions, which afford direct and easy access from the Atlantic into Lake Ontario, are 45 feet wide, 200 feet long, and 8 feet deep, and have a cubic capacity of 72,000 feet. The present locks of the Welland canal, which opens a similar passage from Lake Ontario into Lake Erie, are 26 feet wide, and 150 feet long, with a cubic capacity of at least 31,200 feet, which may be readily increased to the full amount required, by lengthening the locks.

The Rideau canal, which connects Montreal with Kingston, on Lake Ontario, through an interior route by way of the Ottawa river, is only 5½ feet deep; but its locks are 33 feet wide, and 142 feet long. Their present cubic capacity is 23,430 feet, but if lengthened to 220 feet, would be 36,600. The greater width of the lock would measurably compensate for the shallow draught, and permit the passage of war vessels of dangerous dimensions.

From this brief summary, it will be seen at once, that the British Government, whether designedly or not, has secured to itself means of naval access to the Lakes, far exceeding those the United States now possess, and that the only appropriate and certain remedy for this evil is the adequate enlargement, without delay, of the locks of the American canals leading into that important chain of waters. On this point, the opinions of our intelligent and loyal citizens are very decided. Numerous petitions have already reached Congress from the inhabitants of the cities adjacent to the Lakes, (including, among other eminent individuals, a former President of the United States,) in which they forcibly and truly state that "the United States have no impediment to offer if, during the season of navigation, a fleet of British gun-boats from the Atlantic shall propose to take possession of the entire chain of lakes and connecting rivers," and earnestly solicit the Government to adopt measures for their defense, without delay, by the enlargement of the locks of the Erie and the Oswego canals, expressing their opinion that "the immense national interests involved in the military possession of these waters can be secured in no other mode at so small a cost of time and money."

The country has learned with much gratification, that the Committee on Military Affairs of

the House of Representatives, in Congress, have already had this subject under attentive examination, as forming part of a general system of defense. In the comprehensive and truly national report recently made to the House by that committee, they express their earnest conviction that "a small fleet of light-draught, heavily-armed, iron-clad gun-boats could, in one short month, in 'despite of any opposition that could be made by extemporized batteries, pass up the St. Law-'rence, and shell every city and village from Ogdensburgh to Chicago. At one blow, it could 'sweep our commerce from that entire chain of waters. Such a fleet would have it in its power 'to inflict a loss to be reckoned only by hundreds of millions, so vast is the wealth thus exposed 'to the depredations of a maritime enemy." The vivid language of their report utters but the truth in declaring that the wide-spread cities and commerce of these great inland seas "are now as open to incursion as was Mexico when invaded by Cortez."

It is no sufficient answer to assert that these canals of Canada, affording facilities of access so dangerous, were constructed only for commercial purposes. Nor indeed would it be true. Taught by the experience of the war of 1812, the attention of the most eminent British statesmen and commanders has long been occupied with the importance of these canals, not merely as commercial, but as military channels. Their struggles in that war to secure the naval command of Lake Ontario, together with the conflicts on Lake Erie and Lake Champlain, are well remembered. In 1814 the Duke of Wellington declared to the British Ministry "that a naval superiority on the lakes is a *sine-qua-non* of success in war on the frontier of Canada." The treaty of peace in 1815 was followed, in 1817, by the "diplomatic arrangement," by which Great Britain and the United States mutually agreed to dismantle their vessels-of-war on the lakes and reduce their naval force on each side "to one vessel of one hundred tons burthen on Lake 'Ontario, and one on Lake Champlain, each armed with one 18-pound cannon, and on the upper 'lakes to two such vessels, armed with like force."

In 1819, but two years after that pacific arrangement, the Duke of Richmond, then Governor-General of Canada, transmitted to the Secretary of State for the Colonies a report from Lieutenant General Cockburn in favor of a line of water communication, unquestionably intended as a military work, leading from Montreal, by way of the Ottawa river and the interior chain of minor lakes, of which the Rideau is one, to Kingston, on Lake Ontario. In 1823, it was determined that the cost of the work should be wholly defrayed by the mother country. In 1825, a commission, of which Major General Sir J. Carmichael Smith was President, reported the estimated expense to the Duke of Wellington, then a member of the British Government, whereupon the canal, with connecting works on the Ottawa, was constructed, openly and avowedly as a military work, by the Royal Engineers, under the direction of the Ordnance Department. It was completed in or near the year 1831 at a cost exceeding a million sterling. The preamble of the act of the local Parliament in Canada, authorizing the taking of lands for the purpose, passed in February, 1827, expressly recites, that "His Majesty has been pleased to direct meas-'ures to be immediately taken, under the superintendence of the proper military department, 'for constructing a canal connecting the waters of Lake Ontario with the river Ottawa, and afford-'ing a convenient navigation for the transport of naval and military stores."

In 1831, Colonel Durnford, of the Royal Engineers, in his testimony before a committee of the British Parliament, stated that provision was made for block-houses at several of the locks of the canal, and that the work being intended as a military communication, it was necessary that fortifications and works of defense should be erected at the entrance of the canal, and in its immediate vicinity at Kingston. A fortress of very considerable strength was accordingly erected, and is now the most important military work on Lake Ontario.

The completion and defense of this interior line of water communication has been followed by the construction of a series of short canals, of much greater size, along the St. Lawrence river and around its rapids. Their capacity very far transcends any commercial necessity which can reasonably be expected on that line of communication for a long time to come. In point of fact, the descending trade of the St. Lawrence (necessarily preponderating, like that of the Erie canal, largely over the ascending) is not one-third of that of the Erie canal. Nevertheless, the existing locks of the Erie canal are adequate to pass a descending trade double of that it now enjoys; while, again, the locks on the St. Lawrence canals, 45 feet by 200, have double the capacity of those on the Erie;—from which three elements, it is arithmetically evident, that the locks of the St. Lawrence have at least twelve times the capacity really required for any purpose of existing commerce.

It was the deep conviction of danger in this inequality between the canals of the two countries for the purposes of national defense, and the absolute necessity of regaining, without delay, that equality of naval access and condition intended to be secured by the treaty stipulation of 1817, which led the legislature of New York to pass the act of the 22d of April last. That such were the views of the legislature fully appears from the reports on the subject made in their Senate and Assembly. The report of Mr. Ogden, chairman of the Canal Committee of the Assembly, substantially confirmed by that of Mr. Cook in the Senate, truly asserts that these large dimensions of the Canadian locks, "so far beyond the meagre wants of Cana-'dian commerce at the time, suggest that the higher object of military defense was not lost sight 'of by far-seeing British statesmen in their construction; and they will not complain if, on a 'subject of so much moment, we follow their example. A preparation for defense and provision 'for the rapid concentration of military and defensive power in time of need could not be con-'strued, by any logical or fair course of reasoning, into hostile intent; nor would it provoke 'criticism from a nation so careful as Great Britain in placing herself in defensive position.

"Defensive measures are always pacific measures; their bearing and tendency are towards 'peace; they avert rather than provoke war; induce caution on the part of rivals and antago-'nists, and never provoke hostilities on the part of friends. It is submitted with entire confidence 'that the means of placing gun-boats speedily and certainly on the border lakes will tend greatly 'to prevent war with our northern neighbor. She would respect us more, and surely not fear us 'less, if we stand on a perfect equality with herself in the particular referred to."

In opposition to these sensible and patriotic views, it has been asserted that no real necessity exists for enlarging the channels of our American canals for the passage of gun-boats, but on the contrary, that the safety of our cities and commerce on the lakes, may be fully and surely pro-

vided for, either by accumulating and storing materials for gun-boats at points on the canals near the lakes, or, in case of war, by marching a military force into Canada to seize and destroy its canals.

In respect to the first of these expedients, it may be observed that even if it could be lawfully and wisely adopted under the provisions and true intent of the existing treaty, the very materials thus to be stored for any adequate number of vessels (estimated at $200,000 each) and probably destined only to decay through a long course of years, would cost very nearly, if not quite, as much as the whole expense of enlarging the 90 locks on the Erie and Oswego canals; and, furthermore, that we should much underrate the resolution and activity of our vigorous adversary in assuming that, with his large and powerful fleet of gun-boats, ready at any moment to be precipitated into the lakes, he would give us time to complete our vessels before the mischief would be done.

In respect to the proposed seizure and destruction of the Canadian canals, it may in like manner be observed, and that too in a spirit of perfect amity, that our British brethren, sharing with ourselves a descent from common ancestors, inherit, at least, a reasonable amount of courage, if not of obstinacy; that the matter of seizing and destroying their canals, however trifling it may seem, would hardly go by default; and, at any rate, that their numerous and swift sailing gun-boats could ascend and ravage the whole coast of the lakes before our military columns of adequate force could be put in motion.

Such, too, seems to be the present opinion of the British people, as manifested through their public journals. The leading article in the *London Times* of the 7th of January last, in reference to the disturbing affair of the Trent, then pending, declares:

"That as soon as the St. Lawrence is opened again there will be an end of our difficulty. 'We can then pour into the lakes such a fleet of gun-boats, and other craft, as will give us the 'complete and immediate command of those waters. Directly the navigation is clear, we can 'send up vessel after vessel without any restrictions, except such as are imposed by the size of 'the canals. The Americans would have no such resource. They would have no access to the 'lakes from the sea, and it is impossible that they could construct vessels of any considerable 'power in the interval that would elapse before the ice broke up. With the opening of Spring, 'the lakes would be ours."

It was after a careful examination of this important matter in both Houses of the Legislature of New York, and taking into view not only the greatly exposed condition of her northern water frontier, but the immense stream of lake commerce pouring into her territory and through her canals and railways, not only from the mineral and grazing districts of northern Pennsylvania and Ohio, but from the truly imperial group of agricultural States adjacent to the upper lakes, that the act of the 22d of April was passed by large majorities both in the Senate and Assembly, placing all the State canals connected with the lakes at the service of the General Government. By the provisions of the act, the United States will become fully entitled, whenever it shall provide the pecuniary means for enlarging the locks on the Erie and the Oswego canals, to the perpetual right of passage through those canals "free from toll or charge, for its vessels of

war, boats, gun-boats, transports, troops, supplies, or munitions of war." The act grants a similar right of perpetual passage in case the Government shall provide the means for two other works, one being a branch canal (now partially constructed) from the Erie canal to the safe and commodious harbor of Great Sodus Bay on Lake Ontario, furnishing a very desirable rendezvous for naval vessels; the other being the enlargement of the Champlain canal, on the direct route of the old and natural war-path of our revolutionary history, and opening a channel of rapid and easy access to an important military point on the St. Lawrence river before Montreal, where the chain of water communication between Upper and Lower Canada might be broken.

The cost of enlarging the locks on the Erie and Oswego canals, to be paid by the United States, will not exceed $3,500,000. That of the branch to the Great Sodus Bay is not yet definitely ascertained. The enlargement of the Champlain canal has been estimated by the State engineer at $3,700,000; but with due economy may probably be considerably reduced below that amount.

The enlargement of the locks on the Erie and the Oswego canals can be easily completed in a single winter, and, if necessary, by the 1st of May next. Up to the 30th of September, 1861, the State had expended, in constructing these two canals, and in enlarging their dimensions to the size required for the commerce of the lakes, the sum of $43,575,167. Their net tolls, deducting repairs, are wholly devoted to the reimbursement of the debt incurred in their enlargement, and are kept at the lowest rate, consistent with that object.

These then are the prominent features of the canals which the legislative act of New York has placed at the service of the Government. In view of her peculiar geographical position in the Union, with three of the six great northern lakes (Champlain included) lying immediately on her border, she now feels entitled respectfully but earnestly to claim, that the national duty of defending such a chain of seas, not only from imminent and immediate danger, but the remotest chance of assault and ravage by a maritime enemy, is among the highest and most imperative obligations of the General Government. In entering into the Union, of which, through every change of circumstance, she has been a loyal member, she voluntarily and cheerfully surrendered to the General Government, without stint or reservation, the rich revenues from foreign imports, which her geographical position, commanding at once the ocean and the lakes, would have enabled her, with any views less comprehensive and national, practically to monopolize.

For the sake of that priceless Union, she gave up all to the common treasury, for the very purpose of enabling the National Government then called into being fully and faithfully to discharge its sovereign and transcendent duties, among which none was more conspicuous or emphatic than the solemn and perpetual obligation imposed by the Constitution, "to provide for the common defense of the States." She does not presume or desire to calculate the value or count the cost of that glorious national structure, and nevertheless, in view of the scanty measure of protection and relief she now asks, far less for herself than the loyal group of sister States richly clustering around the Lakes, she cannot refrain from stating that the duties collected at the single port of New York, and faithfully paid over to the national treasury, already amount to $971,063,527; of which immense sum $355,235,855 is included in the single decade from

1850 to 1860. These duties, it is true, were eventually paid by the consumers of foreign products scattered broadcast throughout the nation, but it must be remembered that of those consumers a population of 10,858,005 are embraced within the States adjacent to the Lakes, without including the narrow but very valuable strip of territory on those waters belonging to Pennsylvania.

How much, or, rather, how little, has been done by the General Government to provide for the common defense of the States around these inland seas from hostile attack, sufficiently appears from the fact, that the whole amount appropriated for every species of lake defense, up to the present moment, is but $1,676,650, while on the other hand, the cost of the fortifications alone on the Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico, to say nothing of the hundreds of millions expended on the Navy, has been $34,487,809.

To these facts the attention of the General Government is now invited, in no spirit of complaint or supplication, but only of unaffected filial respect. New York did not complain, even in 1811, when the Government, then administered by President MADISON, denied the petition presented in her behalf by DE WITT CLINTON and GOUVERNEUR MORRIS, two of her first Canal Commissioners, seeking the scanty measure of aid which, at that early day, she really required for pushing the Erie canal through her nearly untrodden territory out to the great national wilderness around the lakes. The refusal, not particularly parental in tone or manner, served only to invigorate her youthful and unaided efforts, and compelled her to win alone the reputation she gladly would have shared with the ever-honored Union, of which she was, and is, and ever will remain, a dutiful and obedient member. But the present exigencies of her canals, like those of the kindred canal of Illinois, are wholly national; the duty of adapting them to the common defense emphatically and exclusively national; and it would be neither just nor generous to require either her or Illinois separately to burthen their people for objects plainly of primary interest and necessity to all the States.

II. The question then arises, cannot the United States now afford to expend the amount necessary to defend these lakes, with their immense fleets of commercial vessels, from maritime aggression; and this brings us to the class of facts secondly above proposed for examination, involving the national importance of the COMMERCE of the Lakes.

They will conclusively show, that the national commerce, for which the lakes afford the natural channel, constitutes a fundamental and vital element of our national strength; that it has now attained such dimensions that the General Government cannot, wisely or safely, neglect or disregard it; and that, even for fiscal purposes, its pecuniary value is so great, with a prospect of increase so enormous, that the Nation cannot afford, for a moment, to leave it exposed to any possibility of disturbance.

The present condition and past growth of this commerce will need to be stated somewhat in detail. It is so interwoven with the Erie canal, its great national outlet to the ocean, that the history of neither can be complete without including both.

The Erie canal, completed in 1825, with the scanty dimensions of forty feet wide and four feet deep, was regarded, for several years after its completion, by a considerable portion of our

population, as a local work, mainly intended for the State of New York and its local commerce. Nor was this narrow view, at the time, particularly surprising, for, as late as the close of navigation in 1837, of the total weight of the cargoes carried on the canal, (somewhat inaccurately denominated in the official tables as its "*tonnage,*") being 387,506 tons in all, the local proportion furnished by the State was 331,251, while that of the cargoes coming from States west of her limits, and which, for brevity, may be called its "national commerce," amounted only to 56,255. Notwithstanding this disparity, and the slender portion then furnished by the West, an effort was made in the legislature of 1838, for nationalizing the Canal, at least, in public opinion, by pointing out the latent capacity of the agriculture of the States around the Lakes, and its inevitable effect in reversing the proportions then existing between the local and the national cargoes. Differences of opinion, honestly entertained, on such a point, could be settled only by time. Twenty-four years have now elapsed, and the following is the result:

Tons reaching tide-water by the Erie Canal:

	LOCAL.	NATIONAL.
1837	331,251	56,255
1842	258,672	221,176
1847	618,413	812,840
1856	374,580	1,212,550
1861	291,184	2,156,425

It will thus be seen that the proportions which, in 1838, were four to one in favor of the "local" commerce, were so entirely reversed that in 1861 they became nearly eight to one in favor of the "national."

By further analyzing the official tables we shall readily detect the cause of this immense increase of the national commerce, in the rapid development of the agriculture of the West, which may be regarded as "national agriculture," in contradistinction to the local agriculture of New York. The comparative progress of this interior agriculture is strikingly manifest in the cargoes of wheat and wheat flour, carried by the canal, being, in barrels:

	LOCAL.	NATIONAL.
In 1837	747,676	284,902
1842	543,064	1,146,292
1847	791,106	3,989,232
1856	276,034	3,209,741
1861	745,022	6,712,233

If to this be added the very important element of Indian corn, (the transportation and consumption of which have reached only their infant stages,) the contrast will be yet more striking.

The "national" wheat and flour carried on the canal in 1861, was.....6,712,233 barrels.
The "national" corn was.....6,796,390 "

13,498,523

The "local" wheat and flour was.....745,022
The "local" corn was.....210,510

955,532

showing a "national" proportion in these two cereals exceeding thirteen to one.

A similar disparity also exists in the products of "the forest," being, in tons:

	LOCAL.	NATIONAL.
In 1837	174,733	7,637
1842	125,623	31,069
1847	328,652	117,323
1856	173,608	335,797
1860	166,687	647,705

The fact may also be added, though rather incidental to the main subject, that the 494,057 tons of mineral coal transported through the Canal and its branches in 1861, were exclusively furnished by the coal fields and coal-bearing mountains of Pennslyvania and Ohio, transmuted into gold by that very transportation.

It is on these facts, that we claim that the Erie canal with the Oswego canal as its co-equal and complement, has now practically become what its early projectors and friends insisted it would eventually become, a national canal. Like the national City of New York, geographically included within the limits of a single State, it belongs virtually to the nation. Its great office is to transport, not the trifling local products of any single State, but the accumulated products and fabrics of great groups of States to and from each other, and to and from foreign nations. Any measures for protecting its commerce, or in any way cheapening its means of transportation, inure to the benefit of the State of New York only in the scanty proportions above exhibited, being at present but one in thirteen for its most valuable cargoes; and even that proportion, small as it is, must steadily diminish under the resistless progress of our western agriculture.

The Erie and Oswego canals carry but a portion of the commerce of the lakes. Nearly all the merchandise which ascends the lakes, requiring expeditious movement, is carried, as it properly should be, by the railways, which also carry a small portion of the descending cargoes.

Of the descending agricultural products, the proportions of flour and grain coming from the Lakes and carried eastward, in 1861, were as follows:

From Buffalo	51½ per cent.
Oswego	15½ "
Dunkirk and Suspension Bridge	9 "
Minor points in New York	11½ "
	87½ "
Descending the St. Lawrence to Montreal	12½ "
	100

In respect to the total amount of the commerce of the Lakes, it may be stated in general, that the descending portion consists mainly of agricultural products, with a moderate per centage from the forests and mineral regions; and that the ascending portion embraces the equivalent amount of manufactures, merchandise, and other products or property received in exchange. Its pecuniary value in both directions is between two and three hundred millions.

This descending commerce is almost entirely the growth of the last twenty years. In 1837 it contributed to the Erie canal, in values, but $4,713,636. So slow was its early progress that, as late as 1841, the amount of wheat and flour received at Buffalo was only 5,785,960 bushels; and of Indian corn, but 201,031 bushels.

The wheat and flour increased in			1851 to	10,609,341;	the corn to	5,988,775
"	"	"	1856 "	14,095,911;	"	9,633,277
"	"	"	1860 "	24,014,324;	"	11,386,217
"	"	"	1861 "	37,973,175;	"	21,026,657

being 59,007,832 bushels of these two cereals, with about two millions of smaller grains.

The total amount of cereals of all descriptions carried on the lakes, and consisting almost exclusively of wheat and flour and Indian corn, as extracted from the carefully prepared reports of the Boards of Trade of their principal cities, is as follows:

From Chicago	54,167,007	bushels.
Milwaukie	18,778,629	"
Toledo	18,706,510	"
Detroit	7,167,450	"
Estimated for other ports,	3,000,000	"
	101,819,596	

The proportions may not be entirely accurate, but they suffice for the main purpose, which is to bring boldly out the one, gigantic and all but overwhelming fact, that the cereal wealth, yearly floated on these waters, now exceeds one hundred millions of bushels. It is difficult to present a distinct idea of a quantity so enormous. Suffice it to say, that the portion of it (about two-thirds) moving to market on the Erie and the Oswego canals, requires a line of boats more than forty miles long to carry it. The whole hundred millions of bushels, if placed in a single line of barrels of five bushels each, would span the American Continent from New York to San Francisco, with a remnant nearly long enough to cross the Pacific. Shall not the American fleets, which yearly carry a mass of food so enormous, be protected from maritime assault and devastation?

The limits of the present communication forbid the full consideration of the transcendent importance of a cereal wealth, so immense and capable of such enormous increase. Its existence is a new fact in the history of man. In quantity, it already much exceeds the whole export of cereals from the Russian Empire, the great compeer of the United States. Under the comprehensive and magnanimous statesmanship of that truly Continental Power, a magnificent system of canals, and river-improvements, and railways, steadily prosecuted through every political vicissitude, from the days of Peter the Great down to the reign of the present enlightened Emperor, connects its vast agricultural interior with the Ocean and the Mediterranean, through the Baltic, the White and the Black seas—encircling the empire with points of agricultural export, stretching round from Odessa to Riga and St. Petersburg, and thence away to Archangel—and yet its total yearly export of cereals was, in 1854, but twenty-seven millions of bushels, and in 1857 only forty-nine millions, being a little less than half the amount carried in 1861 upon our American Lakes.

It was the constant aim and effort of ancient Rome, even in the zenith of its power, to provision the Capital and the adjacent provinces from the outlying portions of the empire. The yearly crop contributed by Egypt, under Ptolemy Philadelphus, was fifteen millions of bushels. Under the prudent administration of the Emperor Severus, a large store of corn was accumulated and kept on hand, sufficient to guard the empire from famine for seven years. The total amount

thus provided was but one hundred and ninety millions of bushels. The product, in 1850, of cereals, in the five Lake States of Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, and Wisconsin was 252,000,000 of bushels; being of wheat 39,000,000, and Indian corn 177,000,000. In ten years. as shown by the census of 1860, it increased to 354,000,000 bushels; being of wheat 78,000,000, and corn 275,000,000; the residues consisting of the smaller grains.

Nor is this all. A prospect far more grand and national is just opening on the commerce of the Lakes. The great and long-cherished measure of connecting their southwestern extremity, by an adequate water communication, directly with the Mississippi, near its confluence with the Missouri, and thus uniting, in one vast, continental system, the broad basin of the lakes with the great network of navigable rivers, outspread for thousands of miles over the wide expanse of the great central interior of the Union, is now awaiting the decision of the National Legislature, which, in view of responsibilities so august, might well resume the significant title of "*Continental* Congress," adopted by their fathers. Let us not attempt to lift the veil from a future so stupendous, inevitably destined to repeat, on a yet grander scale, that immense agricultural development around the lakes which has now become historical. The rich cereals of Missouri, and Iowa, and Minnesota, and Kansas, States just creeping from their cradles, are already numbered by hundreds of millions of bushels, much of it perishing, or wastefully consumed for fuel, merely for want of this new avenue to the Atlantic.

The prediction in 1838, that our great interior States must eventually "become the common granary of the Union, and discharge the duty of supplying subsistence to the surrounding communities," though seriously questioned at the time, is already nearly, if not entirely verified. The fundamental law of demand and supply, necessarily causing the most advantageous distribution of labor, especially in a continental nation united like ours, under a common government, is now, at least partially, obeyed. The wheat crop of New York, whose principal and proper office is commerce, has already fallen to 8,681,000 bushels, hardly enough to feed her population for one-third of the year. The bushels produced in 1860 by all New England were but 1,077,000, sufficient only for three week's consumption. Surely, if any portion of our whole republic is especially interested in securing the food-bearing vessels of the Lakes from the possibility of capture or interruption, it is the three millions of sagacious, loyal, and thrifty people who inhabit the granite ranges and rocky promontories of that ancient and noble family of States who, finding it easier and better to spin than to plough, compel their numerous and sparkling waterfalls, so richly scattered over their rugged country, to purchase from the fertile West the bread which they require. The magic power of the Union so entirely abolishes East and West, that the fabrics of the East are practically only the food of the West, re-appearing in another shape, and in that more portable and convenient form, increasing the sum of our foreign exports.

It was a fortunate, if not a providential, coincidence, which led, in 1846, to the removal of the artificial and arbitrary restraints on the freedom of commerce created by the British corn laws, just as the vast agricultural power of our lake States began to dawn on the civilized world. The imports of cereals into the British Islands instantly rose from 37,916,000 bushels in 1846,

to 115,959,000 bushels in 1860; and it may be safely affirmed that the year will never again arrive when those islands will yield food enough for their own consumption. Despite any and every struggle, the stern necessities of hunger will bind them at last, with bands stronger than iron, to the nation that can feed them.

Our tables of exports of domestic produce for the last forty years are replete with instruction as to the commercial and fiscal value, for national purposes, of the commerce of the Lakes. The total value of breadstuffs and provisions yearly exported to foreign countries, as exhibited by those tables, was $12,341,901 in 1821; and in 1836, had actually diminished to $10,624,130; and again in 1838, to $9,636,650. Up to 1845, it had increased only to $16,743,421, but in 1847, when the agricultural products of the great interior States began to pour in heavily from the Lakes (as shown by that unerring barometer, the Erie canal,) it rose at once to $68,701,921.

Since that time it has fluctuated more or less, with the varying necessities of the nations of Europe; but, in 1856, the amount had reached $77,187,301, which was again increased in the year ending the 30th of June, 1861, to $93,969,682, exclusive of $4,245,410 in cattle, hides, and tallow, which, for the present inquiry, might fairly be included. It is a fact of much significance that, in the year last mentioned, the total value of the cotton exported was but $34,051,482, and during the current year little or nothing, conclusively showing that we shall be compelled, at least for a season, mainly to rely on our exports of food and our manufactures, which are its direct or indirect derivative, for the means of importing the duty-paying foreign commodities, from which the Treasury must derive its revenues, apart from taxation. The value of the manufactures exported in the year last mentioned, (excluding those of cotton, which were $7,957,038,) was $25,149,037, which, added to the $93,969,682 of food, makes a total export of $119,118,689. This sum will purchase its equivalent in foreign commodities, on which an average import duty of 25 per cent. would be $29,779,471; conclusively demonstrating that the commerce of the Lakes, for which these national canals furnish the necessary outlets to the seaboard, has become eminently and emphatically national in its character and consequences; that it constitutes a fundamental and vital element of our national strength, political, commercial, and fiscal; and that, in all these respects, it has now attained a national importance that American statesmen will not willingly, and cannot safely disregard.

With the view thus presented of the direct influence of these agricultural exports in securing duty-paying imports in return, it is really difficult to prescribe a proper limit of expenditure for securing the completion of cheap and capacious navigable channels, by which to augment the quantity brought to the seaboard; but it is certain that, if the due enlargement of the New York and Illinois canals were to cost even $20,000,000, and should increase the yearly quantity but 10,000,000 of bushels, the import duties on the foreign commodities which that increase would purchase would very shortly reimburse the whole amount.

In conclusion, it remains only to notice an objection, which possibly may be urged by individuals of timid temperament, that the great national work of uniting the Hudson through the canals and lakes with the Mississippi, by an unbroken water communication, affording ample

means, not only of public defense but of rapidly increasing the national commerce, and its consequent contributions to the common treasury, is a measure to be considered only during a period of peace, and should not be undertaken or encouraged at the present time, nor until the pending effort to dismember the Union shall be finally terminated.

This objection has no real force. On the contrary, if the nation has temporarily lost a portion of its resources, it needs all the more to foster and replenish the residue. If one-half of the body politic be paralyzed, it is surely wise to strengthen the other. Nor is the real ability of the Government to discharge all its duties impaired to any serious extent. Despite the sneers of open enemies or treacherous friends on either side of the Atlantic, our country, in substantial credit, in agricultural wealth, in manufacturing power, and, above all, in every element of moral force, never stood higher.

Nor would any national adversity, however severe, justify the abandonment or disregard of a distinct constitutional obligation, or the neglect of measures plainly calculated to increase our fiscal power, and encourage the industry and commerce of our loyal people. The hour of adversity is the time to try both men and nations. It is the opportunity kindly accorded to them by Providence, to show to the surrounding world their steady courage, their calm consciousness of strength, their indomitable, self-sustaining power.

Such has been the example of every nation truly great. The British government bravely contending, all but single handed, for nearly twenty years against the colossal power of the first Napoleon, did not, for a moment, neglect to foster the commerce which enabled it to maintain that very struggle. The sturdy old Hollanders, after inundating all their land to resist their haughty enemy, fitted out a fleet to sweep the Channel. It was amid the long and wasting wars of Louis the Fourteenth, that his great canal of Languedoc was constructed, under the consummate statesmanship of Colbert, to connect the Atlantic with the Mediterranean. Its triumphant completion, immortalized by the historian and the poet, was solemnly celebrated amid the benedictions of the Church, and the acclamations of assembled France.

The American Lakes, with the enlarged canals of New York and Illinois as their chief accessaries, if laid down on the map of Europe, would reach from the Atlantic to the Volga, and open an unbroken navigation through a majestic line of principalities, monarchies, and empires, for ages disunited, and widely differing in language, laws, and race. By a beneficent Providence, this splendid series of connecting waters has been committed to the American Union, for its highest purposes, both in war and peace. It is for the honored head of the Government now to show, that fully recognizing this solemn trust, he is ready, with the co-operation of Congress, to go vigorously forward and complete a work so important to the American people, for all coming ages.

Respectfully submitted, in behalf of the State of New York, by

SAMUEL B. RUGGLES.

WASHINGTON, *June 9th*, 1862.

EXECUTIVE MANSION.

WASHINGTON, *June 13th*, 1862.

Fellow citizens of the Senate and House of Representatives:

I herewith transmit a memorial addressed and presented to me, in behalf of the State of New York, in favor of enlarging the locks of the Erie and Oswego canals. While I have not given, nor have leisure to give the subject a careful examination, its great importance is obvious and unquestionable. The large amount of valuable statistical information which is collected and presented in the memorial, will greatly facilitate the mature consideration of the subject, which I respectfully ask for it, at your hands.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

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